



Bill to ban junk food ads

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FAST food advertisements would be completely banned on children's television channels, websites and smartphones under new proposals to curb childhood obesity.

The Greens leader, Bob Brown, will introduce a private member's bill into the Senate tomorrow that would beef up previous attempts to stop junk food ads from being screened on free-to-air television.

"We have a burgeoning health crisis of childhood obesity and need to curb the relentless advertising of unhealthy foods to children," he said. "The problem is not going away. It is getting worse.

"Self-regulation has clearly failed and the Australian Parliament has a duty to act. This bill is about the well-being of our community and future generations."

An attempt to restrict the hours in which junk food ads were screened on free-to-air television failed after the federal government and the Coalition voted against it.

The bill would ban junk food ads on commercial TV between 6am and 9am, and 4pm and 9pm on weekdays; and between 6am and 12pm, and 4pm and 9pm on weekends and during school holidays.

Pay television channels dedicated to children's programming would be banned from showing junk food advertisements. Websites aimed at children, such as gaming sites or sites linked to television shows, would also face the same ban.

Companies using emails and smartphones to target customers

Fast-food nation

- ▶ One in four students are overweight or obese, with a significantly higher rate in poorer areas.
- ▶ One-third drink four or more cups of soft drink, cordial or sports drink a week.
- ▶ 51 per cent tried a new food or drink product in the past month they had seen advertised.



would be prevented from sending material promoting unhealthy foods. However, if the bill was successful, only websites based in Australia would be covered.

A study released this year found children were being exposed to the same number of junk food ads on television despite the fast food industry's introduction of voluntary rules about marketing products to children. Public health groups, including the Heart Foundation and the Obesity Policy Coalition, have backed the push for the ad bans.

"More and more research is showing that children are highly vulnerable to advertising because they do not understand its persuasive intent and lack the cognitive ability needed to interpret advertising," the Heart Foundation chief executive officer, Lyn Roberts, said.

"Obesity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, Australia's No.1 killer."